

Title: Forensic Analysis of the January 6 Gallows Structure: Construction, Materials, and Investigative Implications – Were the Gallows a Protest Prop or a

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Note: This is an original work and all observations are by the author. The timeline was generated by ChatGPT. Costs and construction time were estimated by the author and tested against similar structures.

Executive Summary: The gallows erected on the U.S. Capitol grounds on January 6, 2021, remains a key symbolic and forensic anomaly. Despite extensive surveillance, no individuals have been arrested or publicly identified in connection with its construction.

This white paper presents a detailed analysis of the gallows' design, materials, construction timeline, and logistical implications based solely on visual evidence and engineering logic. The conclusions suggest a high degree of planning, material specificity, and investigable retail traceability that has not been publicly pursued.

Given its dramatic appearance and prominent placement, the gallows raises a critical question: was it a genuine expression of protest sentiment, or was it constructed by individuals intending to incite, discredit, or provoke further unrest?

1. Structural Observations

- The gallows was constructed with pressure-treated 4x4s for the uprights and crossbeam, and untreated pine or SPF (Spruce-Pine-Fir) for the platform, braces, and ladder components.
- The structure appears to be overbuilt for a symbolic prop. It included diagonal bracing, a raised platform, and durable hardware, capable of bearing human weight.
- Fasteners included 1/2" lag bolts or carriage bolts, fender washers on both sides of joints, and nylon-insert lock nuts—a more expensive and secure fastening approach than standard hardware.

- Deck screws were also used extensively for bracing and secondary joints, indicating use of power tools on-site.
- All lumber appeared new and free from transport damage, splintering, or weathering, suggesting recent purchase and careful handling.
- Construction time, material weight, and logistics indicate 5 to 6 people were involved onsite and that is verified by investigative reports.

2. Materials & Cost Estimate

Category	Description	Est. Cost
Lumber	PT 4x4s, 2x6, 2x4, plywood	~\$300
Hardware	Bolts, fender washers, lock nuts, screws	~\$46
Misc.	Rope, spray paint, marking tools	~\$10
Total		\$356 (2025 costs)

All items are readily available at big-box retailers like Home Depot or Lowe's. The selection of specific hardware (fender washers and lock nuts) further narrows potential retail sources.

The costs are estimated based on average local (Idaho) costs, however costs fluctuated greatly from 2019 to 2020.

3. Timeline & Assembly

- Surveillance footage shows the platform was wheeled in and partially assembled around 6:30–7:15 a.m.
- The uprights and crossbeam (PT lumber) were not installed until ~1:00 p.m., coinciding with the riot's peak.
- This strongly suggests the uprights were acquired same-day, likely at store opening (~7:00 a.m.), and brought in separately.
- It is also likely that the rope used for the noose was purchased at the same time as the uprights. Rope is typically stored in the same department or adjacent aisles as framing hardware in home improvement stores, and the synthetic 5/8" rope used is not a commonly pre-owned household item. The clean appearance of the

rope and the timing of its installation (~1:00 p.m.) support this conclusion.

- Total estimated construction time with 5-6 people: 45-60 minutes

4. Source & Transport Inference

- The materials were likely purchased from a big-box retailer or contractor supply within 5-10 miles of the Capitol.
- No damage or weathering indicates careful transport, possibly in a van or covered pickup.
- The fender washers, rope, and nylon lock nuts are less commonly purchased together, making SKU-cluster queries viable.
- Estimated total weight of the structure was between 250-300 lbs, distributed across multiple sections (uprights, frame, plywood deck, and accessories).
- The most probable drop-off or parking zone was near Peace Circle or along First Street NW, approximately 250-300 yards from the west front assembly location. Materials were likely hand-carried or moved by cart from this access point.

5. Investigative Oversight

- Major retailers maintain transaction records, time-stamped receipts, surveillance footage, and SKU sales logs.
- Law enforcement has not publicly disclosed any attempt to trace purchases via SKU clustering or transaction logs.
- The combination of materials and timeline could realistically narrow suspects to fewer than 50 transactions across a small number of stores on Jan 6 morning.

6. Surveillance and Media Documentation

- The U.S. Capitol complex is covered by more than 1,700 surveillance cameras, with an estimated 20-40 cameras having clear or partial visibility of the west front lawn and Peace Circle where the gallows was assembled.
- These include dome-mounted systems, rooftop units, mobile trailers, and perimeter fixed cams.

- Around 1:00 p.m., an estimated 40 national and international media crews were actively filming in the area, including CNN, Fox News, AP, CBS, Reuters, MSNBC, and numerous live streamers.
- The gallows structure, with the Capitol dome as its backdrop, was captured in hundreds of photos and videos—many of which likely recorded the installation of the uprights and noose from multiple angles.

7. Profile of the Builder

- Likely has moderate-to-advanced carpentry experience
- Access to tools and a garage/workshop
- Organized, detail-oriented, and deliberate
- Purchased items with forethought; not improvised

8. Identification of the Man on the Gallows

- The man photographed standing on the platform during the final assembly of the gallows was wearing a tan trench coat, light-brown dress shoes (likely oxfords or derbies), a dark baseball cap with an unknown emblem, and a face covering.
- Despite the face being obscured by a scarf or gaiter, multiple angles and high-resolution stills exist from media and surveillance footage.
- The scarf appears to be a shemagh-style wrap or tactical keffiyeh, commonly associated with military surplus gear or Middle Eastern-style headwear. This type of scarf is widely sold at army/navy stores, tactical supply shops, and online platforms like Amazon.
- Facial identification is moderately likely using enhanced techniques such as gait analysis, build comparison, partial facial mapping (e.g., eyes and brow), and comparison to DMV or military records.
- The combination of distinctive clothing, posture, and physical traits—especially in the context of time-synced surveillance systems—would significantly narrow candidate identities if a focused effort were made.
- No federal agency has released any attempt to identify this individual, nor has there been public notice of a subpoena or database query targeting matches for his clothing or accessories.

9. Possible Reasons for Lack of Identification

- Despite the availability of surveillance footage, media documentation, and traceable materials, no suspects have been named. Several factors may explain this:
 - **Lack of investigative priority:** Law enforcement may have deprioritized this symbolic act in favor of prosecuting individuals who breached the Capitol building.
 - **Absence of electronic tracking:** The builders may have avoided using identifiable electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, digital payment methods) while transporting and assembling the structure.
 - **No retail purchase linkage:** If cash was used and no loyalty accounts or identifiable transactions were logged, retail tracing would be significantly hindered.
 - **Use of disguises:** The individual on the platform was partially masked, and his outfit was nondescript enough to avoid easy identification.
 - **Surveillance gaps or withheld footage:** Some camera angles may not have been monitored in real-time, or relevant footage may not have been analyzed or disclosed.
- It remains unclear whether the individuals involved were ever targeted for facial recognition comparison or cross-referenced with known militia or protestor databases.

10. Congressional and Law Enforcement Prioritization

- Despite the symbolic prominence of the gallows—often featured in media as a focal image of the January 6 protest—its construction, transportation, and assembly have received minimal sustained attention in formal congressional hearings or law enforcement disclosures.
- The gallows has been referenced rhetorically in congressional statements as a “threat to democracy” or emblematic of violent intent, but there is no known subcommittee investigation or dedicated inquiry into the identity of its builders.
- The FBI and DOJ have released hundreds of “wanted” posters for individuals involved in property damage or building entry but have not

posted any surveillance stills, suspect sketches, or public calls for tips specific to the gallows.

- No known federal reports, OIG summaries, or J6 Committee exhibits provide a timeline, photo documentation, or assessment of the gallows construction as a discrete act.
- The absence of procedural transparency on this topic contrasts with the extensive tracking of lesser symbolic actions (e.g., selfie photos on Capitol stairs), suggesting either a strategic avoidance or institutional indifference.
- This oversight raises the question of whether the gallows—despite its shocking optics—was treated more as media narrative than as a forensic priority.

Conclusion: The gallows was not an impulsive creation. It was overbuilt, symbolically aggressive, and materially traceable. The lack of arrests or suspect identification, despite abundant physical and retail evidence, raises serious questions about investigative priorities and follow-through. A focused forensic inquiry into store transactions, SKU logs, and camera footage could still yield leads.



Figure 1 - A crowd-erected gallows hangs near the United States Capitol during the 2021 storming of the United States Capitol" photographer Tyler Merbler



Figure 2 Noose and gallows in front of the Capitol amid protest flags; AFP/Getty Images (Andrew Caballero-Reynolds)